

## Gulf of Maine Coastal Program

Building partnerships to identify, protect and restore nationally important fish and wildlife habitat in the Gulf of Maine watershed



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## *What we've accomplished with partners...*

### Identifying habitat

We create and share databases and GIS maps with partners to help catalyze and support habitat protection and restoration projects. Major efforts include:

- Important habitat for endangered species, migratory birds and searun fish of concern in U.S portion of the Gulf of Maine watershed,
- Nationally significant nesting seabird islands in coastal Maine,
- Atlases of Atlantic salmon spawning and rearing habitat in Maine's federally listed rivers and
- Beginning with Habitat, a statewide partnership for habitat protection.

### Protecting habitat

We have worked with partners at 305 sites to permanently protect 1.67 million acres of high value fish and wildlife habitat through fee and easement acquisition. Sites include:

- 48 seabird nesting islands,
- 175 coastal wetlands and associated upland buffers,
- 18 uplands,
- 64 areas adjacent to wild Atlantic salmon rivers, and
- four landscape-scale Northern Forest projects that prevent residential development, protect extensive freshwater wetland and forested habitat for fish and wildlife habitat and ensure sustainable forestry.

We help private landowners, land trusts and state and federal land management agency partners by identifying priority habitat and by providing technical, biological, mapping, writing, fundraising, outreach and other support needed to coordinate successful habitat protection projects. Some of the matching federal funding programs that we successfully use include North American Wetland Conservation Grants, National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grants, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Grants (e.g. Maine Atlantic Salmon Collaborative) and Land and Water Conservation Fund grants.

### Restoring habitat

We have worked with partners at 162 sites to restore more than 17,000 acres of habitat for migratory birds, diadromous fish and endangered species on:

- 77 coastal wetlands,
- 67 river restoration sites, including 11 dam removal and 14 fish passage projects at existing dams.
- Six native grasslands and pine barrens, and
- 12 seabird nesting islands.

We help watershed associations, angling clubs and other non-government partners, along with state and federal land management agencies by providing technical skills in identifying and designing priority restoration projects, permitting, funding, implementing, monitoring, coordinating partnerships and conducting outreach. Some of the matching federal funding programs we successfully use include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service Fish Passage Program, National Fish and Wildlife Foundation (e.g. Maine Atlantic Salmon Collaborative and the Maine Habitat Restoration Partnership) and National Coastal Wetland Conservation Grants.

### Leveraging funds

- \$37.3 million in federal funds linked directly to USFWS sources
- \$27 million in other federal funds
- \$126.4 million in non-federal funds

The Gulf of Maine watershed includes a variety of interconnected habitats that support "trust resources" of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Our trust resources include federally threatened and endangered species and other animals that regularly cross state and international boundaries -- such as migratory birds, diadromous (searun) fish and marine mammals.

Estuaries, where fresh river water and salty ocean water mingle, provide productive nurseries for many marine species, vital habitat for diadromous fish, and important feeding grounds for breeding and migrating waterbirds. Salt marshes provide food and cover for searun fish, as well as breeding and migratory habitat for waterbirds. Salt marshes also serve as a natural water purification system. Mudflats abound with animal life. Huge concentrations of worms, clams, molluscs and crustaceans survive just below the surface, providing a bounty of food for people and waterbirds.

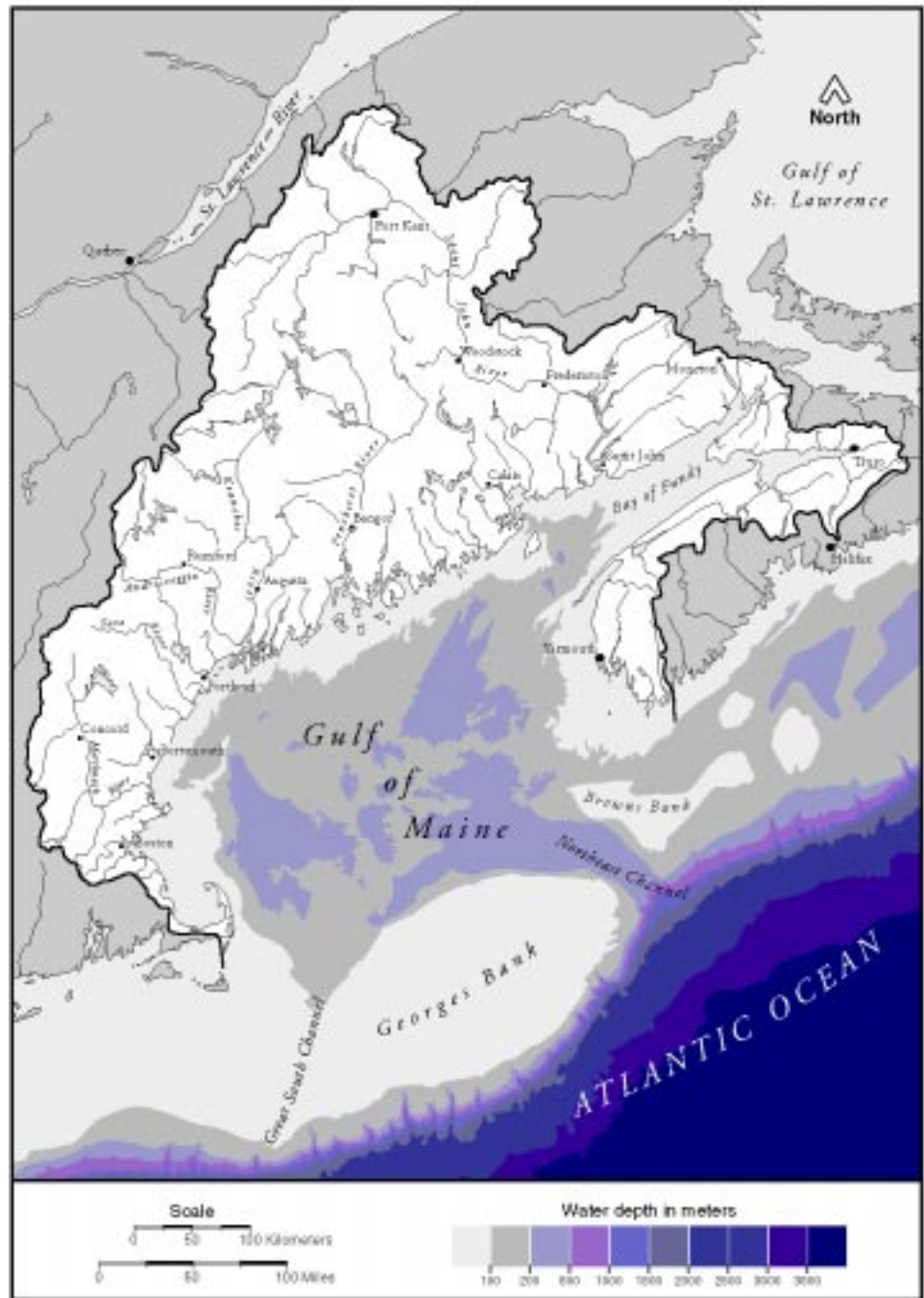
Sand beaches provide habitat for two rare bird species -- the least tern and the piping plover. Intertidal and nearshore subtidal habitats support marine algae which provide home for a broad array of organisms, including scallops, flounder, urchins, lobster, and migratory waterbirds. Islands provide critical habitat for seals and nesting seabirds.

Healthy rivers and their forested surroundings provide wildlife-rich habitat for bald eagles and raptors, waterbirds and breeding neotropical migrants. Rivers also provide migratory routes for searun fish, including Atlantic salmon, river herring, shad, American eel, striped bass and other diadromous species.

Cold oxygen-laden waters subject to constant movement, mixing and upwelling create a nutrient-laden Gulf of Maine marine environment -- one of the world's most productive continental shelf communities. Many who live on the shores of the Gulf of Maine appreciate its biological wealth and have nourished themselves from its bounty. However, habitat loss, fragmentation and degradation, wetland and associated upland loss, overharvesting, oil spills, pollution and other cumulative effects of development threaten the integrity of the Gulf ecosystem.



## Gulf of Maine Watershed



## U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) protects and restores fish and wildlife resources and their habitats -- for the natural environment and for us. Nationwide, the Service manages over 500 National Wildlife Refuges dedicated to protecting fish and wildlife. The Service also operates National Fish Hatcheries, raising and stocking about 200 million native fish annually. Through its Ecological Services program, the Service safeguards endangered species, resolves fish and wildlife issues related to hydropower projects, curbs toxic contamination and restores and protects valuable fish and wildlife habitat on public and private lands through partnerships. The Service also investigates cases and enforces federal wildlife laws. Through its Federal Aid program, the Service directs millions of dollars annually to state fish and wildlife agencies for their use in protecting, managing and restoring habitat and providing conservation education.